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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

State Department review completed

24 August 1961

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMENTS BY KHRUSHCHEV ON US REPLIES TO THE VIENNA AIDE-MEMOIRE

Khrushchev has not commented directly on either of the US aide memoire replying to the Soviet memoire given to the US at Vienna. Since that meeting, however, he has covered the Berlin issue and the possibility of negotiations in private talks with diplomats in Moscow.

2 July - Conversation with UK Ambassador:

Khrushchev said that the West was now threatening to cut off trade and even to go to war if the Soviet government signed a peace treaty. If other countries strengthened their military forces in Germany the Soviet Union would do the same and could always have forces in a position to protect the territory of its ally, the DDR. But, in any case, modern wars would be fought with nuclear weapons...The Soviet Union and also the USA would no doubt lose tens of millions, but the Soviet Union would certainly go to war if the Western Allies tried to force their way through to West Berlin after the Soviet Union had signed a peace treaty with the DDR. It would, however, be ridiculous for two hundred million people to die over two million Berliners.

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Khrushchev agreed (with the Ambassador's statement) that a negotiation was desirable, but not on the 1959 basis, which he dismissed categorically as no longer applicable to the present situation. He regarded sixteen years as too long a period to maintain a provisional post-war arrangement. The world must settle down. Only the German question really divided the Soviets from the Western powers...It was obvious that neither the UK nor France nor even President Kennedy wanted a reunified Germany, which would mean war sooner or later.

Khrushchev continued that what really divided us over Germany was not so much the issues themselves, on which we were at heart agreed, as questions of prestige. The Soviet government (and here Khrushchev appealed to his colleagues for confirmation), having decided definitely that peace treaties or a peace treaty must be signed this year, had given most careful thought to safeguarding Western prestige. Hence their proposal, which was sincerely meant, that West Berlin (not, he was careful to add, the whole of Berlin) should be a free city, preserving its social and economic system and its ties with the West, and with guarantees through the presence of troops of the three Western powers and of the Soviet Union...It would of course be preferable that the position should be regularized by general peace treaties;

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but since the West seemed reluctant, the Soviet government would sign their own treaty with the DDR and no Western threats would hold them back from this.

Khrushchev said that they did not question our rights stemming from the wartime and post-war agreements concerning occupation and access. But these rights were only valid until the signature of a peace treaty. Once the Soviet Government had signed a peace treaty with the Government of the DDR, as they fully intended to do, this would terminate the state of war throughout the whole territory of the DDR, including of course the land and air corridors to Berlin and indeed, strictly speaking, in Berlin itself, since this was within the territory of the DDR. The Soviet Union would neither impose any blockade upon West Berlin, including the Western troops there, nor attack them. But in the absence of any Western signature of a peace treaty or some other agreed arrangement, access to West Berlin through what would then be the territory and airspace of the DDR could only be permitted under normal international law, i.e. by arrangement with the DDR. Any Western attempt to push troops or aircraft through without DDR agreement would be regarded by the Soviet Union as an act of war and the Soviet Government would support the DDR in resisting any such acts by force. The Western powers were so preoccupied with their so-called

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obligations and prestige that they failed to see the obvious fact that any other attitude would constitute an intolerable blow to Soviet prestige.

Khrushchev asked the Ambassador to assure the Prime Minister that he had not intended to make any threats, but only to remove any possible misunderstandings. The Soviet Government would prefer a settlement by agreement and were convinced that their proposals did not infringe the interests or prestige of the Western powers nor the freedom of West Berlin. It was only if, under West German pressure, we refused to join in a peace treaty and then resorted to force to maintain ourselves in Berlin that the Soviet Union would meet force with force. However, he remained confident that the Prime Minister and President Kennedy and General De Gaulle, all of whom were wise and reasonable men, would join in an effort to find a solution "by way of reason."

8 July - Conversation with Yugoslav Foreign Minister Popovic:

Yugoslav officials said that during these talks Khrushchev appeared convinced that "sensible Western statesmen" would not permit the issue of Berlin to develop into a conflict. He seemed convinced that current US policy was being set by Adenauer, and did not represent "real" US interests in Berlin and that US interests were mainly a matter

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of prestige. He also assured Popovic that 31 December was not a deadline, and that the USSR would be willing to continue negotiations, provided the talks were not dragged out indefinitely. Khrushchev remarked that the West apparently considered that after signature of a separate peace treaty a major crisis would develop. He stated, however, that when the West saw there would be no really substantive change in access procedure "they will swallow it."

26-27 July - Conversations with John J. McCloy (Moscow cable version):

Khrushchev raised subject (of Berlin) and expounded the Sov position essentially in same terms as in Vienna, emphasizing his determination to go through with a peace treaty under any conditions. Deplored talk in US about possibility of war and stressed Sovs did not want war but if war imposed on them they had means destroy all Europe. Said Sovs would match each US division sent Europe with two of their own. Re German Reunifcation, claimed no Western power sincere about it; requesting this info be kept confidential, claimed De Gaulle had told him he wanted preserve two Germanies and had confirmed this position last week when he received Ambassador Vinogradov. Stressed German unification not negotiable and strictly internal matter of Germany. Referred Sov proposal for entering agreement on Germany and contended Sovs wanted no clashes with US but rather friendship and good relations. Lancing

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West Berlin boil would clear atmosphere since no disputes except Germany exist between two countries. At same time fully realize dangerous moment being approached but peace treaty would still be signed and nothing could intimidate him.

Referred to exchange aide-memoires on Berlin and said Sovs now preparing reply to ours. Compared this exchange with kicking foot-ball back and forth and said this would probably continue until peace treaty signed when US might kick ball different kind and Sovs would do same in return. However, US as well as UK appear willing negotiate; therefore situation should not be inflamed and common sense should be used. Invited West advance its own proposals or peace treaty and claimed Sovs did not wish impose their own conditions. Negotiations on peace treaty would be open and each side could express its views. Expressed agreement with thesis better have difficult negotiations than war.

Pleaded for understanding Sov position and asked McCloy convey best wishes to President. Said believed President displaying restraint and dignity in Berlin matter; true he sometimes engages in polemics but always leaving door open for negotiations. Said if President had proposals Sovs would be happy to consider them and perhaps suggest counter proposals.

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Such exchange might take place on confidential basis. Reaffirmed willingness to guarantee freedom and independence of West Berlin once peace treaty signed and went so far as to say he thought any Western proposal for such guarantees would be accepted.

27 July (President's address): In strong emotional tone, Khrushchev stated President in effect had declared preliminary war on Sovs because he had presented Sovs with ultimatum and had said if ultimatum not accepted that would mean war. Sovs regretted President took this course, but accepted challenge and would not change policy directed at signing peace treaty and solving West Berlin problem on basis freedom and independence West Berlin. History would judge US if war should occur and would also determine who would survive. Said he would talk to General Staff and Defense Minister and ask them to review situation and strengthen Sov defenses. Said he would be back Moscow Monday (31 July) and hear their report. If necessary, would publicly inform Sov people that US presenting Sovs with ultimatum which tantamount to war. US actions confirmed his January 6 thesis that when capitalists and imperialists lost confidence in victory on basis of peaceful coexistence they would resort to war. Contended war would not be over Berlin but rather war of monopolists and imperialists against socialist countries. US trying

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to assume role international gendarme, something Hitler had aspired to. Reiterated whole Europe would be destroyed in war. As to US, USSR would have to compete with it and probably neither side could wipe out the other. US would survive, but there would be no wall street any longer because people would not tolerate system unleashing wars. Said President's intention "mobilize" armed forces and industrial potential might not be followed by similar action on Sov part because war bound be thermonuclear and Sovs have enough bombs so no need take people away from industry. Said modern war would be decided not by infantry but by rockets and nuclear bombs. Kept emphasizing his rocket commands and implying his great superiority in this field. Reiterated would consult with General Staff and Sov Govt and draw proper conclusions. Also would inform people US would start war if peace treaty signed because people should know about inevitability of war; war seems inevitable because Sovs will sign peace treaty. Sovs will counter any US action and will respond to war with war. Only a madman can declare war today. President's statement that there was threat to freedom West Berlin was fallacious because Sovs proposed guarantee to keep the freedom of that city. Expressed view President reasonable, young man full of energy and wished display that energy. However, if war should occur he would be last President because no one knows what would

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happen after war. Said he had made all these statements because it would be strange if, having seen President's speech, he were simply to talk about Soviet willingness disarm while President requesting another $3.5 billion for arms. It would be strange if he should ask McCloy merely convey greetings to President or if he were to "try jump into President's throat without scratching it." Sov prickly and quite difficult to digest. However, he still believes in President's reason. President will have to consult with his Allies and uncertain whether they would want war. In any event, Sov proposal for negotiations on peace treaty remains valid and open. Sovs wish resolve this problem peacefully, remove this rotten tooth, and develop US-USSR relations, but on basis of peace treaty and not on basis of ultimatum. Said after thunder storms people cool off, think problems over and resume human shape, casting away threats.

Re nuclear tests, Khrushchev asserted Sovs not testing clandestinely and assured McCloy would not do it in future either. Said strong pressure on him to resume tests because many inventions and discoveries had accumulated and designers want to test them. This pressure now stronger in view of Berlin situation and threat of war if peace treaty is signed. Said he had been successful in resisting pressure so far but if US intensified its threat of war over peace treaty it would

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assist those in Soviet Union who want resumption. Stated Sov scientists believed 100 megaton bomb would be most economical cost wise. Sovs have rocket capable of lifting such bomb. However, such bomb would require testing. Asserted he had told his scientists perhaps US would resume testing and thus help them test their bomb. Conceded no agreement in Geneva in sight since US would not agree to Troika and Sovs could not abandon it. Reiterated Sov arguments re espionage and lessons of Congo events, as well Sov position that a test ban would not resolve disarmament problem. Likewise, recited standard Sov line on French testing. Contended present Sov position test ban not due Chinese pressure and claimed no pressure on part anybody possible in socialist camp. Stated Chinese would of course eventually develop nuclear bomb but claimed ignorance when that would be. Stated under general and complete disarmament Troika would be dropped and would not be acceptable even if US should propose it. No Troika would exist even in course process of GCD and control and inspection would not be subject to veto or any restriction.

2-3 August - Discussion with Premier Fanfani:

Khrushchev asserted that he was not concerned by an American military buildup, which would be too late, and did not fear economic reprisals because he believed Europe needed

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its commerce with the Soviet Union. Khrushchev considered negotiations feasible but only if soon, and directed toward a peace treaty and a Berlin settlement. According to Italian officials the only point on which Khrushchev went farther than in previous statements was that after conclusion of a separate treaty the Soviets were prepared to use force to prevent unauthorized air access to Berlin. Khrushchev also emphasized that any Western attempt to force access to Berlin would be met immediately by nuclear force, from the outset.

7 August - Remarks to departing Yugoslav Ambassador:

Khrushchev told the departing Yugoslav Ambassador that no action would be taken regarding Berlin before the German election.

7 August - Conversation with departing Argentine Ambassador:

Khrushchev spoke at length and harshly on the subject of Berlin. He insisted "We will sign a peace treaty." He added, "If this means war to Americans, then there will be war," but claimed he was confident there would not be war because Americans do not want war "any more than we do."

11 August - Informal remarks to British Ambassador at Rumanian Embassy reception:

Khrushchev emphasized his agreement with President Kennedy that negotiations on the Berlin situation are necessary.

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He welcomed the President's statement (apparently referring to the Presidential Press Conference of 10 August).

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